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***Salmonella enterica* in South American sea lions (*Otaria byronia*) from the north coast of San Matías Gulf (Patagonia, Argentina)**

JAVIER ANÍBAL ORIGLIA¹, GUSTAVO DANERI², FABIANA ALICIA MOREDO¹, ARIEL ROGÉ³, ESPERANZA VARELA² Y GABRIELA ISABEL GIACOBONI¹

¹ Facultad Ciencias Veterinarias, Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP). La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

² Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales «Bernardino Rivadavia» (MACN-CONICET). Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

³ Instituto Nacional de Producción de Biológicos (INPB)-ANLIS «Dr. Carlos G. Malbrán». Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

javieroriglia@yahoo.com

There is little information about the diseases that can affect the Argentine populations of pinnipeds. Salmonellosis has been described in marine mammals of different regions of the world. The aim of this study was to detect the presence of *Salmonella enterica* in pinnipeds that inhabit the marine littoral zone of Río Negro province (Argentina) during the breeding season, the serovars circulation and the antimicrobial susceptibility. In December 2017 and March 2018, faecal samples (n=201) were collected from *Otaria byronia* in three rookeries located on the north coast of the San Matías Gulf (Punta Bermeja n=79, Promontorio Belén n=89 and Caleta de los Loros n=33). Samples were taken with swabs and were kept in Cary Blair transport medium. The isolation was carried out using the traditional bacteriological method (FDA-BAM). Presumptive *Salmonella* colonies were

confirmed by biochemical tests. Isolates identified as *Salmonella enterica* were serotyped by agglutination according to White-Kauffmann-Le Minor scheme. Nine antimicrobials (ampicillin, nalidixic acid, gentamicin, ciprofloxacin, chloramphenicol, tetracycline, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, colistin and fosfomycin) were tested using the disk diffusion method and the cut-off point according to the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute M100 ed30 and by the Whonet Argentina network (for colistin). From a total of 201 samples, 14 (7 %) *Salmonella* strains were isolated. Three serovars of *S. enterica* were found: *S. Newport* 11 (79 %) *S. Cerro* 2 (14 %) and *S. Enteritidis* 1 (7 %). Strains were susceptible to all the antimicrobial agents tested. Several *Salmonella* serovars from a variety of pinniped species were described before. *S. Newport* and *S. Cerro* were previously found in *Phocarctos hookeri* from New Zealand and in *Otaria byronia* from Chile. Although all serovars can cause disease in humans, *S. Enteritidis* is one of the most important serovars of *Salmonella* transmitted from animals to humans. This is the first report about *S. Enteritidis* in pinnipeds from South America coasts. This finding warns about new zoonotic agents in these wildlife species.

Palabras clave: *Salmonella enterica*, *Salmonella Enteritidis*, *Otaria byronia*, Patagonia, Argentina.